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Illinois
Environmental
Protection Agency

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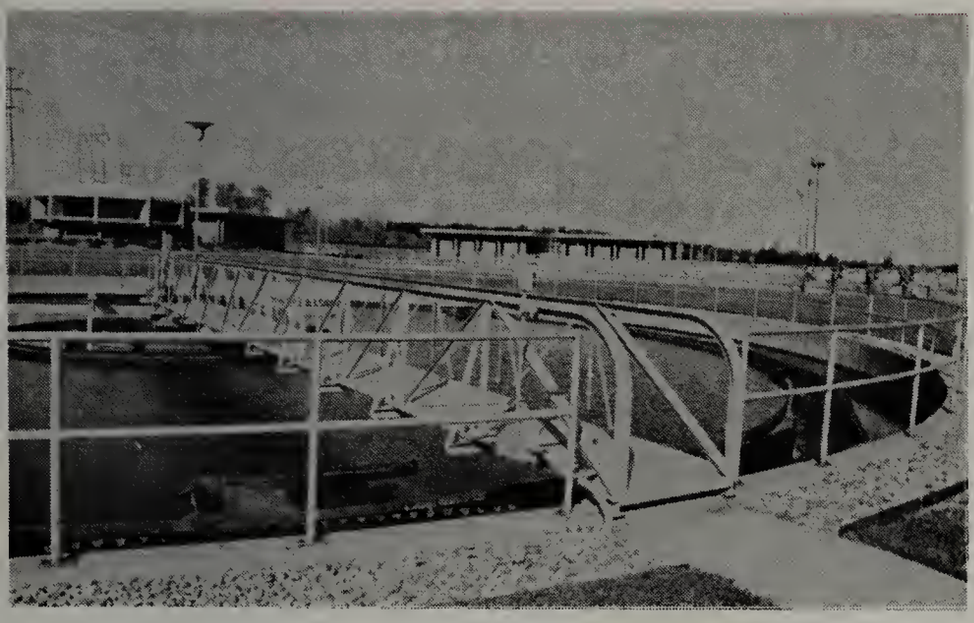

The Municipal Wastewater Assistance Program

Operating a wastewater treatment plant is a continuous and costly job. Proper training and equipment are necessary components but support from state and local officials can definitely help a facility comply with water quality regulations.

The Municipal Wastewater Assistance program, established by section 104(g)1 of the federal Clean Water Act, is a cooperative effort between state environmental agencies and communities to bring facilities into compliance and/or maintain compliance.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) steps out of its enforcement role to serve as a facilitator, providing innovative and cost-effective methods of improving plant performance for communities wanting to achieve and maintain compliance. Since the beginning of the program in 1984, the IEPA has worked with 35 communities that are now capable of operating complying facilities.

COMMON PROBLEMS

Communities participating in the Municipal Wastewater Assistance program identified many common needs, or "performance limiting factors." The IEPA offered communities assistance in battling some of the following problems:

* understanding process control procedures such as sludge wasting and return rates, mixed liquor concentrations, and dissolved aeration tank oxygen levels;

* improving sludge handling and disposal procedures, one of the most complex areas of operation;

* practicing proper process control and reporting of NPDES data. In most cases, adequate laboratory equipment was needed to test and interpret data to appropriately control the process and monitor the facility;

* improving operating budget and user charge system;

* not enough staff, or problems with staff turnover because of low pay;

* plant design problems with clarifiers, aerators or disinfection;

* concerns over industrial dischargers to the system;

* implementing preventive maintenance; and

* problems with equipment and process units being down and inoperable.

HOW TO BECOME A PROGRAM CANDIDATE

Having compliance problems is no assurance that a community will be able to qualify as a candidate in the Municipal Wastewater Assistance program. The federal requirements for eligibility include:

* facilities working to meet NPDES permit requirements but major construction is not needed to comply;

* facilities must be mechanical plants with design flows of five million gallons per day or less;

* community must be a current, or former state or federal grantee for a wastewater project.

The key to a successful project is total community involvement. For that reason, the IEPA feels there must be strong support from city officials to approve operator time at the plant and to provide the financing to pay for needed improvements. It is also important for city officials to support their operators, who are willing to learn new operational procedures. The operators must not have any record of operator certification violations.

Municipal facilities which meet some or all of these requirements will be considered a candidate to be screened and se-

lected by IEPA regional municipal assistance coordinators. Facilities with the greatest needs, or the best opportunity for success are selected. Candidates are in the program for one federal fiscal year (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30), but extensions can be granted to program candidates needing additional time to complete the operator training program.

CANDIDATE SELECTED - PROJECT UNDERWAY

Before the project formally begins, IEPA regional municipal assistance coordinators visit with the community's officials and plant operators to see if the community will commit to the project and to correcting problems or needs. As the program progresses, visits are made by IEPA field staff based on training needs or to solve particular problems.

After the end of the project work year, the success, accomplishments, failures and unfinished business are reviewed with city officials and operators by the IEPA coordinators.

THE SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

The Municipal Wastewater Assistance program seldom works without total commitment from city officials. Long range results have shown many communities have saved money and are operating in compliance at the same, or at lower operating costs than prior to the 104(g)1 assistance program. In many cases, the cost for compliance is also more economical than paying a penalty for non-compliance. Implementing preventive maintenance programs and identifying energy savings are the methods most used to reach a cost-effective end result.

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For more information on the program and participating communities in your area, please contact the regional municipal assistance coordinator at the IEPA regional office nearest you.

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Rockford, IL 61103
(815)987-7755

Region 2
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Maywood, IL 60153
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Region 3
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Region 4
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Region 5
4500 S. Sixth St.
Springfield, IL 62706
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Region 6
2009 Mall St.
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